

Travel trouble: US Olympians face uncertain road to Beijing

By EDDIE PELLIS AP National Writer

DENVER (AP) — Making an Olympic team is hard enough. This winter, those who earn their spots on the U.S. squad might find it takes even more work to get to Beijing.

Among the slow trickle of information coming out of China in advance of February's Olympics was news that, with virtually no flights operating between North America and China, Olympians very well might have to get to Beijing through a still-undetermined set of connecting flights that could more than double their travel time.

As things stand this month, most of the 250 or so athletes who make the U.S. team will need to take a charter that connects

them to Beijing-bound flights scheduled out of four cities, none of which are in North America.

The uncertainty has turned what is already a logistical challenge — getting all these Olympians and their thousands of pounds of equipment to China — into something even more complex. And it has turned what is already an event beset with unprecedented challenges — less freedom of movement, a vaccine mandate and the prospect of competing in a country that is poised to restrict negative coverage, including over widely documented human-rights abuses — into something even more difficult.

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LIVE ENTERTAINMENT 7 DAYS A WEEK

SUNDAY:
TICO KOCK
STEEL DRUM
4 - 6pm

MONDAY:
ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

TUESDAY:
JEAN PAUL
SAXOPHONIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

WEDNESDAY:
PAULA RIDERSTAP
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

THURSDAY:
RICKY THOMAS
GUITAR
7 - 9pm

FRIDAY:
RICKY THOMAS
GUITAR
7 - 9pm

SATURDAY:
ANGELA FLORES
VIOLINIST
6:30 - 8:30pm

PAULA RIDERSTAP
SINGER
6:30 - 8:30pm

Happy Hour
12 - 1 / 4 - 6 / 9 - 10

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Continued from Front

"We're very used to being flexible with our planning and schedule," U.S. skier Mikaela Shiffrin said in a recent interview with The Associated Press. "But we very rarely don't have a plan at all. So that is definitely another added source of stress."

Difficult travel is nothing new for Olympic athletes, and their schedules have only become more jumbled in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic that reshuffled competition schedules and, with New Zealand mostly shut down, made it even harder to find snow during the offseason.

The U.S. Olympic team's sponsor, Delta Airlines, might still be able to arrange charter flights directly from the U.S. to Beijing, but with 11 weeks until the start of the Games, everything is still up in the air.

As of this week, approved flights into Beijing are expected to depart from Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong and Paris. The U.S. ski and snowboard team's tentative plan is to charter flights from Los Angeles to one of the points in Asia, then switch to Olympic charters. Further com-

plicating the issue is that some of these athletes are in Europe for the World Cup season. Without normal commercial options available, the task of moving them around is more difficult.

The U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee is ultimately in charge of getting the ski team and the rest of the U.S. teams, outside of hockey, to Beijing. With an extra connection through Asia, or a stop in Europe, travel times could be around double what would normally be a 12-hour journey from the U.S. West Coast to Beijing.

Rick Adams, the USOPC's chief of sport performance, said everyone was aware that the quick turnaround after the Tokyo Olympics and the COVID-19 protocols "would make planning for Beijing very complex."

"That said, we pride ourselves on being the best prepared NOC and NPC in the world, and we are exploring all options to get our Olympic and Paralympic athletes — as well as support staff — to the Games safely and efficiently," he said.

Athletes aren't the only group be-

ing impacted by China's rulemaking in advance of the Olympics.

The Foreign Correspondents Club of China put out a statement this month complaining of "lack of transparency" from the Beijing Organizing Committee and the IOC with regards to Olympic-related reporting in China.

The organizing committee told China's Xinhua news agency that it plans on increasing credentials for test events and is assigning staff to manage interview requests and inquiries. The committee said it does not recognize the FCCC.

Most journalists and Olympic support staff also have been on hold in making their travel plans.

Much of the travel confusion stems from U.S. and Chinese carriers' decisions to reduce the number of flights between the countries from more than 300 a week to single digits. The rollbacks started when demand dropped off sharply in the wake of early COVID-19 outbreaks. The reinstatement of the flights was slowed because of diplomatic wrangling between the countries, along with strict quarantine rules that makes travel to either place

difficult. Just this week did the U.S. reopen travel to some foreign visitors who can show proof of vaccination.

The U.S. athletes are now collateral damage in this, as the USOPC negotiates with Delta for charter flights that are expected to cost well into six figures.

Though the extremely limited number of flights between America and China is unique, the U.S. isn't the only one dealing with an unprecedented amount of uncertainty this close to the Games. A recent search of the Air Canada website offered at least one option for flights between Vancouver and Beijing (with a stop in Shanghai), where similar searches of Delta and United websites offered none between the U.S. and Beijing.

"Planning for these Games has been challenging due to COVID-19, but we experienced similar issues during our planning for Tokyo," Canadian Olympic Committee CEO David Shoemaker said. "We have no reason to believe that we will have any trouble getting Team Canada to the Games on time and ready to compete." □

Woman sues over slot game payout; 13 others make same claim

By WAYNE PARRY Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP) —

A Pennsylvania woman is suing the manufacturer of a popular online slots game, claiming it wrongly refused to pay her a \$100,000 jackpot due to "a bug" in the product.

New Jersey regulators revealed Friday that 14 gamblers, including Lisa Piluso of Yardley, Pennsylvania, have filed the same complaint against the company, saying they were told they won far more than the manufacturer says they were actually entitled to.

Piluso says Las Vegas-



"had discovered an issue/bug within the game" that wrongly failed to clear bonus symbols from previous rounds from a player's screen.

"This error caused the patron(s) to believe that their bonus round winnings were higher than the actual winnings," Deputy Attorney General Jennifer Russo-Belles wrote.

She added that the state had taken regulatory action against AGS but did not say what that action was. In response to a request from The Associated Press, the attorney general's office on Friday revealed it had fined AGS \$1,000 for failing to ensure that the game was functioning properly. It could not immediately be determined if the company has paid the fine or whether it is contesting the matter. An attorney to whom the violation notice against AGS was sent did not return a message seeking comment Friday. The violation notice has not been posted on the gaming enforcement division's web site, which includes a bi-monthly list of enforcement actions taken by the director. □

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IS MORE DUSHI

based American Gaming Systems offered her only \$280, but later upped the offer to \$1,000.

In a lawsuit filed Thursday in U.S. District Court in Camden, Piluso accuses the company of consumer fraud and other wrongful actions related to the jackpot she was told she had won while playing on her cell phone in New Jersey on Oct. 2, 2020.

"I'm an experienced online player, and I was shocked when AGS officials, including the company presi-

dent, told me they weren't going to pay, even when I showed them the screenshot that I made of the \$100,000 jackpot," she said in a statement issued through her lawyer, Paul D'Amato.

"They said I actually won about \$300, but they then offered me \$1,000, saying we were 'nice people,'" Piluso said. "How many other players have been in the same situation but agreed to settle for a fraction of their winnings after being told they, too, were 'nice

people?"

AGS did not respond to requests for comment Friday. The Capital Gains game she was playing was on an online platform hosted by Caesars Interactive New Jersey, although neither Caesars casino nor its online branch were named as defendants in the lawsuit. Caesars had no immediate comment.

The New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement investigated the matter, and wrote to Piluso on Aug. 27 revealing that AGS

The cosmos beckons for Snoopy onscreen and in real life

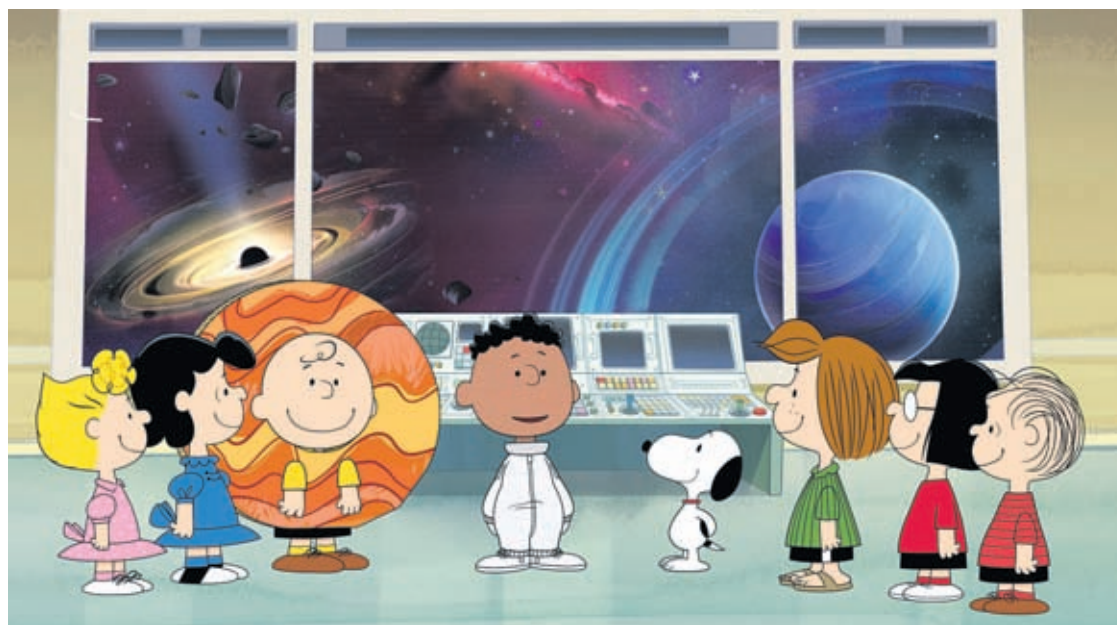
By MARK KENNEDY AP Entertainment Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — A new rocket designed to launch humans to the moon, Mars and beyond will launch next year from Kennedy Space Center in Florida. On board, will be a familiar fuzzy figure — Snoopy.

A 5-ounce plush toy version of the daydreaming beagle — wearing a space suit designed according to NASA's strict specifications — has an important job for the Artemis I unmanned mission.

NASA uses stuffed animals on flights because when the little guys start to float, it indicates that the spacecraft has entered space's zero gravity. Since the toys are soft and light, they won't break anything or accidentally strike a button.

The Artemis I mission is scheduled to circle the moon and then return to Earth in February as a dry run without astronauts, making sure all systems are working for future crewed missions. Also aboard will



be two Lego figurines, part of an educational series.

The upcoming mission announcement coincides with the release Friday of the second season of "Snoopy in Space," the Emmy-nominated animated series on Apple TV+. Season one saw Snoopy become an astronaut and land on the moon. Season two sees him go further in what showrunner Mark Evestaff calls an "epic road trip."

"We have taken a bit of a

step further so that Snoopy is able to go to some of these places that we haven't been, like Mars or the moons of Jupiter or visiting an exoplanet," he says. "And he does it through his imagination, but it's also based on actual science from NASA."

Stephanie Betts, chief content officer at media company WildBrain, said season one was the perfect foundation. "Snoopy became an astronaut and was able

to go to space. Well, now what do you do with that? Well, let's go explore. Let's have that search for life." Back closer to home, the plush Snoopy's gravity-monitoring task — it's officially called the zero gravity indicator — will be far from the first stuffed toy used by astronauts. Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space, had a small doll when he launched on Vostok 1.

Since then, an owl doll and

an Angry Birds toy have been on the International Space Station, a plush R2-D2 was used as the talisman on a Soyuz mission in 2015 and a stuffed snowman Olaf from the movie "Frozen" has gone up. A plush Snoopy has also been on the space station.

Snoopy has a long history with NASA, starting when the Apollo X astronauts Thomas Stafford, John Young and Gene Cernan chose "Peanuts" characters as nicknames — the command module was called Charlie Brown, and the lunar module was Snoopy.

"Someone had the idea of trying to bring more interest into the space program. By the time they got to Apollo 10, they felt that the program was going to become a little stale," said Craig Schulz, son of "Peanuts" creator Charles Schulz. "For my dad, it was probably one of the biggest honor, that could ever be bestowed upon his comic strip." □

Slaying of Chinese student in Chicago spurs call for action

CHICAGO (AP) — The University of Chicago's president is urging city officials and police to treat Chicago's rising violence as a "public health crisis" following the fatal shooting of a Chinese student during an armed robbery near campus.

Shaoxiong "Dennis" Zheng, 24, was standing on a sidewalk in a residential area Tuesday afternoon when witnesses said a gunman stepped from a car and Zheng appeared to struggle with the robber before a shot went off.

The assailant returned to the car and fled, and Zheng was pronounced dead at the University of Chicago Medical Center. No arrests have been made in the killing in the Hyde Park neighborhood on the city's South Side.

University of Chicago President Paul Alivisatos said in a statement Wednesday expressing sadness over Zheng's slaying that

the university community and local residents "see a clear and urgent need to strengthen public safety."

"The violence afflicting Chicago is on the same scale as a public health crisis and demands a commensurate response," he said in the statement that said the school has been in contact with the mayor's office, Chicago police, local alderman and others.

So far this year, there have been five slayings in Hyde Park, compared with none at the same time in 2020, as violence across Chicago has risen for two straight years, the Chicago Sun-Times reported.

Chicago has had at least 698 homicides this year, compared with 680 at the same time last year. That's well above the 442 homicides that city had experienced by this point in 2019, the Sun-Times reported.

Mayor Lori Lightfoot promised Wednesday to meet with police and commu-

nity leaders "to determine concrete, tangible measures (that) can be taken to prevent tragedies such as these in the future" but no specifics have yet been announced.

Zheng, who graduated from the University of Hong Kong in 2019 and earned his master's degree in statistics from the University of Chicago last summer, was the third University of Chicago student killed this year, WBBM-TV reported.

In January, Yiran Fan, a 30-year-old Ph.D. student who was a native of Beijing, was randomly killed while sitting in a car in a parking garage — the first of seven people, from Chicago to Evanston, shot by a gunman, police said. Fan and four other people died.

And in July, Max Lewis, 20, a third-year student who had just accepted an investment banking offer, was fatally shot by a stray bullet on the Chicago Transit Authority Green Line as



he was riding home from his summer internship in downtown Chicago.

At the site where Zheng was shot, mourners have added flowers to a growing memorial to him. During a Wednesday vigil there, Xi Cheng, who had known Zheng for six months, remembered him as a "really positive, nice person." She said the two became friends after they connected online.

Cheng, 22, choked up as

she recalled Zheng and his love for sports, especially table tennis, and photography. "May he rest in peace," she said.

"I can feel he loves Chicago so much," Cheng said. "I can feel he really enjoyed here and loves this (city) so it's really tragic to hear."

The Chinese American Association of Greater Chicago has started an online memorial fundraiser to help cover travel and legal expenses for Zheng's family. □

For 2nd straight month, Americans quit jobs at a record pace

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER
AP Economics Writer
WASHINGTON (AP) —

Americans quit their jobs at a record pace for the second straight month in September, in many cases for more money elsewhere as companies bump up pay to fill job openings that are close to an all-time high. The Labor Department said Friday that 4.4 million people quit their jobs in September, or about 3% of the nation's workforce. That's up from 4.3 million in August and far above the pre-pandemic level of 3.6 million. There were 10.4 million job openings, down from 10.6 million in August, which was revised higher. The figures point to a historic level of turmoil in the job market as newly-empowered workers quit jobs to take higher pay that is being dangled by businesses in need of help. Incomes are rising, Americans are spending more and the economy is growing, and employers have ramped up hiring to keep pace. Rising inflation, however, is offsetting much of the pay gains for workers. Friday's report follows last week's jobs report, which showed that employers stepped up their hiring in



October, adding 531,000 jobs, while the unemployment rate fell to 4.6%, from 4.8%. Hiring rebounded as the Delta wave, which had restrained job gains in August and September, faded.

It is typically perceived as a signal of worker confidence when people leave the jobs they hold. The vast majority of people quit for a new position.

The number of available jobs has topped 10 million for four consecutive months. The record before

the pandemic was 7.5 million. There were more job openings in September than the 7.7 million unemployed, illustrating the difficulties so many companies have had finding workers. In addition to the number of unemployed, there are about 5 million fewer people looking for jobs compared with pre-pandemic trends, making it much harder for employers to hire. Economists cite many reasons for that decline: Some are mothers unable to find or afford child care,

while others are avoiding taking jobs out of fear of contracting COVID-19. Stimulus checks this year and in 2020, as well as extra unemployment aid that has since expired, has given some families more savings and enabled them to hold off from looking for work.

Goldman Sachs, in a research note Thursday, estimates that most of the 5 million are older Americans who have decided to retire.

Only about 1.7 million are

aged 25 through 54, which economists consider prime working years.

Goldman estimates that most of those people in their prime working years will return to work in the coming months, but that would still leave a much smaller workforce than before the pandemic. That could leave employers facing labor shortages for months or even years.

Businesses in other countries are facing similar challenges, leading to pay gains and higher inflation in countries like Canada and the United Kingdom.

Competition for U.S. workers is intense for retailers and delivery companies, particularly as they staff up for what is expected to be a healthy winter holiday shopping season.

Online giant Amazon is hiring 125,000 permanent drivers and warehouse workers and offer pay between \$18 and \$22 an hour. It's also paying sign-on bonuses of up to \$3,000.

Seasonal hiring is also ramping up. Package delivery company UPS is seeking to add 100,000 workers to help with the crush of holiday orders, and plans to make job offers to some applicants within 30 minutes. □

Environmentalists can continue with suit to protect whales



By PATRICK WHITTLE
PORTLAND, Maine (AP) —

A federal court is allowing a team of environmental groups to continue with a lawsuit against the U.S. government that seeks to create stronger rules to protect rare whales from collisions with ships.

The environmental groups

want to protect North Atlantic right whales, which are vulnerable to ship strikes and entanglement in fishing gear. The whales numbered only 366 in 2019, and its population fell to 336 in 2020, a group of scientists said last month.

The petitioners want the National Marine Fisheries

Service to expand areas and times in which a speed limit rule that protects the whales applies. They've also called for the government to make speed rules mandatory and apply them to both small and large vessels.

The administration of President Joe Biden has pushed back against the suit and sought to have it dismissed, but the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia denied that request Wednesday, court records state. The court ruled the government "cannot avoid its obligation" to consider the request, records state.

The lawsuit is a chance to protect the declining whales and also make waters safer for shippers, said Regina Asmutis-Silvia, executive director of the North

American office of Whale and Dolphin Conservation, one of the petitioning environmental groups.

That's especially important because right whales have been spotted outside their typical migratory patterns in recent years, and that can take boaters by surprise, Asmutis-Silvia said.

"This isn't just about protecting right whales, it's about protecting boaters, too," Asmutis-Silvia said. "To me, it's a safety issues for both the vessels and the right whales. They're not easy to see, and they're in newer habitats that people aren't as used to seeing them."

A spokesperson for the fisheries service declined to comment because the lawsuit is still active.

Right whale conservation has been a contentious

topic in recent years because of the potential economic impact of protecting the whales on shipping and commercial fishing. The Maine lobster industry is dealing with a suite of new rules to try to save the whales.

However, a Maine lobster fishing union in October won relief in court to try to stop the closure of fishing grounds off the state. A federal judge said the rules had the potential to economically damage the fishing industry without protecting the whales.

The whales were once abundant off New England, but they were decimated during the commercial whaling era. They've been protected under the Endangered Species Act for decades. □

Cold, hungry, afraid: Mideast migrants stuck on EU doorstep

By RASHID YAHYA and BASSEM MROUE

DOHUK, Iraq (AP)—Sarkawt Ismat was cold, hungry and terrified, trapped between Polish and Belarusian troops facing off on opposite sides of the European Union's eastern border.

The 19-year-old Iraqi taxi driver is among thousands from the Middle East who have been trying to cross into the EU in recent months through a backdoor opened by non-EU member Belarus.

Ismat left his home in Dohuk, a town in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region, two weeks ago, after selling his taxi. He paid \$2,600 to a local travel agency for a bus to Turkey, a hotel stay in Istanbul, a plane ticket to Minsk, and three nights in a hotel in the Belarusian capital.

He hoped to enter Poland and eventually reach Germany to join his older brother, Sarwar, who had successfully completed the journey.

Somewhere near the Polish border, his dreams were crushed. He and others in his group were stopped by Belarusian troops who he said beat them and took their possessions, including his money and cellphone. For days, the group was trapped in a forest, not allowed to enter Poland or return to Minsk.

"I'm scared and want to come back but don't have a penny," he said in a phone interview, using a borrowed mobile. "It is an absolute humiliation here," he said.

"When I traveled, they told me it is very easy. It takes only three days to get to Europe."

That turned out to be wrong.

For many in the Middle East, beaten down by conflict and hopelessness, the lure of jobs and stability in Europe has always been powerful. Legal entry has been near-impossible, with the EU tightening its borders in recent years. Every year, tens of thousands try to get in, embarking on treacherous and, at times, deadly



journeys by sea and land. Others were deterred by such risks until an opportunity for seemingly easy entry to Europe appeared to open up earlier this year. Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko, angered after the EU imposed sanctions on his authoritarian regime following a harsh internal crackdown on dissent, announced he was retaliating by loosening border controls against Western-bound migrants. EU officials accused him of using the migrants as pawns, while Lukashenko denies that and says Europe is violating their rights by denying them safe passage.

Belarus began offering easy tourist visas to Iraqis, Syrians and others from the Middle East and Africa. This meant they could now reach the edge of Europe on comfortable flights, then try to sneak from Belarus into Poland, Lithuania or Latvia, all EU members.

Thousands have attempted the journey since summer. That has led in recent weeks to increasingly tense standoffs on the border Belarus and scenes of desperate migrants huddled in forests amid freezing temperatures. Poland sent riot police and troops to bolster its border guards. At least eight deaths have been reported.

A 44-year-old car mechanic from Syria says he doesn't care about Lukashenko's motives or the reports of

suffering at the Belarus border.

He is determined to reach Belarus with his older sons, ages 16 and 17, and eventually get to Germany. There he hopes to find work and arrange for his wife and two younger children to join him.

"There is no future here for young people, whether in education, culture or social life," he said, asking that his name not be used because he feared publicity could disrupt his plans.

Both Syria and Iraq have been devastated by years of conflict. Syria is a broken country after a decade of civil war that killed more than 400,000 people and displaced half its population. President Bashar Assad prevailed with the help of Russia and Iran, confining those trying to topple him to a small corner of Syria. But the country is in an economic free fall set off by Western sanctions and the cumulative costs of war.

The mechanic said there is absolutely no hope the situation will improve, and it's better to take a risk now than to see his children condemned to despair in Syria. Things are so bad that his oldest son can't even get a required textbook for 10th grade English, he said. When he heard of what was happening in Belarus through social media, he went to a travel agency in Damascus that offered package deals for \$4,000 per person. He applied

for the visa and borrowed money to cover the cost for himself and his sons.

He'll leave for Belarus once he gets the visa, he said.

At this stage, nothing will deter him. He said he's prepared to try four or five times.

"There are people who make it the first time, others the second time and others the third time, but eventually they arrive," he said. "I have to guarantee the future of my children."

A Damascus travel agent said demand has driven up prices for packages to Belarus, from \$2,600 for a flight and five nights in a Minsk hotel, to about \$4,000.

Most Syrians make the trip on private Syrian carrier Cham Wings, said the agent, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of possible harm to his business.

The EU is looking at the role some airlines have played, reportedly considering sanctions against them.

Flight options are shrinking. Turkey said Friday it is halting airline tickets to Iraqis, Syrians and Yemenis wanting to travel to Belarus. Citing that decision, the Belarusian airline Belavia said it also would not ticket citizens of those countries on its Istanbul-Minsk flight.

Iraqi Airways, which suspended flights between Baghdad and Minsk on Aug. 5, has flown home about 1,000 stranded Iraqis from Belarus, and more

rescue flights are planned, said spokesman Hussein Jalil.

Kameran Hassan, an Iraqi, said he and his family of four were forced onto a return flight. They made it into Poland but were caught. After three weeks in a holding center, they were put on a bus with other Iraqis. They were told they would be taken to another camp in Warsaw, but instead were driven to the airport.

"They started to put us by force on the plane," said Hassan, speaking from Sulaymaniyah in Iraq's Kurdish region.

One man fainted when he saw they were being deported "because he had sold everything" for the attempt, Hassan said. Polish escorts carried him on a stretcher onto the flight back to Iraq.

For Sarkawt Ismat's mother, his predicament in Belarus seemed to confirm her fears. Adla Salim had pleaded with him not to go.

Her older son, 22-year-old Sarwar, had left for Belarus three months ago and reached Germany in early October, after spending 10 days hiding in a forest. He suffers from chronic heart problems, and is hospitalized in Germany, she said. The family only let him go because he was ill and they couldn't do anything for him in Dohuk.

"We tried to convince Sarkawt not to go, but he was very insistent," she said. Sarkawt still owed \$10,000 on the taxi that he sold to pay for the trip — money that his father, a peshmerga fighter, now has to pay back from his monthly income of about \$1,000.

All that money now seems to have gone for nothing. Sarkawt was allowed Thursday to leave the forest for Minsk, in preparation for returning to Iraq.

His mother, a 45-year-old housewife, says all she wants is her boy home.

"He calls weeping, saying 'I want to go back to Iraq. I want nothing. I just want to go back. I am hungry and cold'," she said. □

Myanmar court sentences US journalist to 11 years in jail

By GRANT PECK Associated Press

BANGKOK (AP) — A court in military-ruled Myanmar on Friday sentenced U.S. journalist Danny Fenster to 11 years in prison with hard labor, the maximum penalty under three charges, despite calls by the United States and rights groups for his release.

It was the harshest punishment yet among the seven journalists known to have been convicted since the military ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi in February.

Fenster, the managing editor of the online magazine Frontier Myanmar, is still facing additional terrorism and treason charges under which he could receive up to life in prison.

The court found him guilty on Friday of spreading false or inflammatory information, contacting illegal organizations and violating visa regulations, lawyer Than Zaw Aung said.

Fenster wept after hearing the sentence and has not yet decided whether to appeal, the lawyer said.



The harsh penalty is the ruling military's latest rebuff of calls from around the world for a peaceful end to Myanmar's political crisis. The government is refusing to cooperate with an envoy appointed by Southeast Asian governments to mediate a solution, and has not bowed to sanctions imposed by the United States and several other Western countries.

"It's clear that Danny is being made an example of,

and what it shows is that the junta do not care what the international community thinks. They would do as they want, and this is one example of how they are basically showing the international community that they cannot be held accountable," said Manny Maung, Myanmar researcher for the New York-based group Human Rights Watch.

The army's takeover was opposed by widespread

peaceful protests that were put down with lethal force. Security forces killed more than 1,200 civilians and arrested about 10,000 others, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners. Armed resistance has since spread, and U.N. experts and other observers fear the incipient insurgency could slide into civil war.

Fenster was detained at Yangon International Airport on May 24 as he was

about to board a flight to go to the Detroit area in the United States to see his family.

The military-installed government has cracked down hard on press freedom, shutting down virtually all critical outlets and arresting about 100 journalists, roughly 30 of whom remain in jail. Of the seven known to have been convicted, six are Myanmar nationals and four were released in a mass amnesty on Oct. 21. Some of the closed media have continued operating without a license, publishing online as their staff members dodge arrest.

At least three other foreign journalists, from Japan, the United States and Poland, have been detained. The American, Nathan Maung, said he was tortured while in custody.

The hearings on the original three charges against Fenster were held at a court in Yangon's infamous Insein Prison, where he is jailed. They were closed to the media and the public, and accounts of the proceedings have come from Fenster's lawyer. □

Deforestation alerts in Brazil's Amazon rise for 2nd month



By MARCELO SILVA DE SOUSA Associated Press

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) — The number of deforestation alerts in the Brazilian Amazon rose for the second straight month compared to last year, ending a streak of encouraging data at a moment when the government has promised to curb illegal logging.

Alerts in October corresponded to 877 square

kilometers (339 square miles), the highest indicator for the month in five years and 4.9% more than for the same month in 2020, according to daily alerts compiled by the the Brazilian space agency's Deter monitoring system that were released on Friday. September registered 2.3% more alerts than the same month last year.

That data is considered

a leading indicator for complete calculations released near yearend from the more accurate system, Prodes.

The increases follow two months of sharp decreases that had prompted enthusiasm from officials in the government of President Jair Bolsonaro. Environmental groups warned at the time it was too early to consider that data a trend.

The new data comes at a moment Brazil's government has been trying to improve its reputation on environmental issues. At the U.N. climate talks in Glasgow, Scotland, Environment Minister Joaquim Leite announced on Wednesday a target of zero illegal logging by 2028 — pushing up the goal of 2030 that Bolsonaro presented at the White House-led climate summit in April.

"We are committed to stop illegal deforestation in the Amazon", Leite said on Wednesday. His ministry did not respond to a request for comment on the October increase in deforestation alerts.

At the United Nations in September, Bolsonaro credited his administration's redoubled efforts for the plunge of alerts the prior month. But the accumulated deforestation alerts in 2021 have been essentially flat compared to last year, according to the preliminary data.

Before Bolsonaro took office in 2019, the Brazilian Amazon hadn't recorded a single year with more than 10,000 square kilometers of deforestation in over a decade. Between 2009 and 2018, the average per year was 6,500 square kilometers. It averaged 10,500 square kilometers in the first

two full years of Bolsonaro's term.

Bolsonaro has raised concerns among environmentalists by calling for development within the Amazon region and dismissing global complaints about its destruction as a plot to hold back the nation's agribusiness. His administration also has defanged environmental authorities and backed legislative measures to loosen land protections, emboldening land grabbers.

"The data from Deter is a reminder that the same Brazil that circulates in the corridors and halls of COP26, in Glasgow, is the same where land grabbers, illegal loggers and miners have a government license to destroy the forest," the Climate Observatory, a network of environmental groups, said in a statement. □

Not out of the woods: COVID cases rising in Western Europe

By **MIKE CORDER** *Associated Press*

THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Santa won't be getting his traditional welcome in the Dutch city of Utrecht this year. The ceremonial head of Carnival celebrations in Germany's Cologne had to bow out because he tested positive for COVID-19. And Austria is planning a lockdown on unvaccinated people in two hard-hit regions.

Nearly two years into a global health crisis that has killed more than 5 million people, infections are again sweeping across parts of Western Europe, a region with relatively high vaccination rates and good health care systems but where lockdown measures are largely a thing of the past.

The World Health Organization said coronavirus deaths rose by 10% in Europe in the past week, and an agency official declared last week that the continent was "back at the epicenter of the pandemic." Much of that is being driven by spiraling outbreaks in Russia and Eastern Europe — where vaccination rates tend to be low — but countries in the west such as Germany and Britain recorded some of the highest new case tolls in the world.

While nations in Western Europe all have vaccination rates over 60% — and some like Portugal and Spain are much higher — that still leaves a significant portion of their populations without protection.

Dr. Bharat Pankhania, senior clinical lecturer at Exeter University College of Medicine and Health, says that the large number of unvaccinated people combined with a widespread post-lockdown resumption of socializing and a slight decline in immunity for people who got their shots months ago is driving up the pace of infections. Thanks largely to vaccination, hospitals in Western Europe are not under the same pressure they were earlier in the pandemic, but many are still straining

to handle rising numbers of COVID patients while also attempting to clear backlogs of tests and surgeries with exhausted or sick staff. Even the countries experiencing the most serious outbreaks in the region recorded far fewer deaths per person over the past four weeks than the United States did, according to data from Johns Hopkins University.

The question now is if countries can tamp down this latest upswing without resorting to stringent shutdowns that devastated economies, disrupted education and weighed on mental health. Experts say probably — but authorities can't avoid all restrictions and must boost vaccination rates.

"I think the era of locking people up in their homes is over because we now have tools to control COVID — the testing, vaccines and therapeutics," said Devi Sridhar, chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh. "So I hope people will do the things they have to do, like put on a mask."

Many European countries now use COVID passes — proof of full vaccination, recovery from the virus or a negative test result — to access venues like bars and restaurants. Pankhania warned that the passes can give a false sense of security since fully vaccinated people can still get infected — though their chances of dying or getting seriously sick are dramatically lower. But restrictions don't go much further these days, although the Dutch government is reportedly planning a partial lockdown and German lawmakers are mulling legislation that would pave the way for new measures. Austrian Chancellor Alexander Schallenberg announced Friday that unvaccinated people in two regions will only be able to leave home for specified reasons starting Monday, and he is considering implementing similar measures nationwide. But he has said he doesn't want to impose the restric-



tions on those who got the shot.

Austria is seeing one of the most serious outbreaks in Western Europe, along with Germany, which has reported a string of record-high infections in recent days.

"We have a real emergency situation right now," said Christian Drosten, the head of virology at Berlin's Charite Hospital, which has started canceling scheduled surgeries.

Duesseldorf's university hospital said earlier this week that its ICU is full, though many facilities are struggling more with staff shortages than bed space.

Drosten said Germany must increase its vaccination rate of 67% further — and fast. But officials have balked at ordering vaccine mandates and want to avoid any blanket lockdowns.

Health Minister Jens Spahn indicated that Germany could improve its often lax enforcement of COVID pass requirements.

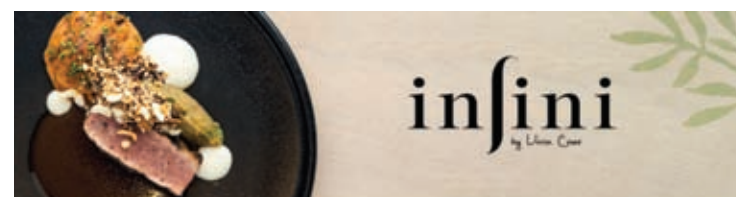
"If my vaccination certificate is checked more often in one day in Rome than it sometimes is in four weeks in Germany, then I think more can be done," Spahn said recently.

The Netherlands is in a similar bind: The country announced the highest daily tally of new cases since the pandemic began Thursday, hospitals are warning the situation could get worse, but officials are reluctant to clamp down too hard. Amid these concerns, organizers in Utrecht said they couldn't in good conscience bring tens of thousands of people together to greet Santa at the an-

hardest hit nations, perhaps offers an example of how the risks can be managed. It has vaccinated 80% of its population, and while face masks are no longer mandatory outdoors, many people still wear them. While infections have ticked up slightly recently, Rafael Bengoa, one of Spain's leading public health experts, said that given the high vaccination rate, "the virus won't be able to dominate us again." Several countries are hoping that pushing harder on immunizations will get them there. Germany plans to reopen vaccination centers across the country to speed booster shots. France is also pinning its hopes on booster doses while urging holdouts to get their first shots. Italy is also expanding its booster program as numbers edge higher.

Pankhania says that no single measure will control the pandemic.

"To really control it, it has to be multi-layered ... avoid crowds, avoid poorly ventilated places, be immunized, wear your mask," he said. □



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Holiday Inn Resort Aruba presents blissful brunch that brightens your day

PALM BEACH — Sundays are to enjoy to the fullest, who does not agree on that. Corals Restaurant at the Holiday Inn Resort Aruba understands this as no other. For a great price you get great value: an extensive, scrumptious, full varied Sunday Brunch Buffet with bottomless mimosas. Take a seat in the cool dining room with full window view at the big blue. This is the definition of a chill Sunday start with big taste!

"It all started with the perception of the ideal Sunday. Sundays are for brunch and mimosas and it appears a trend to take it easy in the morning and indulge into a blissful brunch", says Eva Ruiz, Marketing Director of the resort. "Who does not enjoy to wake up late on a Sunday and take it easy with a coffee, mimosas and everything you crave for?" The Holiday Inn Resort Aruba started this relaxing brunch in February and is positively surprised with the overwhelming enthusiasm. Guests of the resort, outside guests and locals find their way to their favorite brunch spot. Chef Aldwin Donata could not be happier. "We change the menu every Sunday keeping in the all-time favorites. It is great to see that so many find their way to us, but honestly there is no place where you get this quality brunch for this price", he says with pride.

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yourself with all the delicacies you can imagine there is one more you simply cannot skip: the

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For more information call +297 586 3600 or email the resort directly at hiaruba@ihg.com.

Every Sunday from 11:00am to 2:00pm the Holiday Inn Resort Aruba is welcoming you, chef Donata and his crew will await you at Corals Restaurant for the \$35 Brunch Buffet (children 6-12 \$17.50) and children under 5 are free. ☐



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Some regions require proof or certification of negative COVID-19 status before allowing people into or out of the country. With rules and guidelines varying greatly

from country to country, the safest approach is to have recent proof you are COVID-19 negative before you get to the airport. Covid Test Center @ Paseo provides both PCR and Antigen type testing with results within hours; and both are accepted by the CDC.

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your day. No appointment needed here.

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A PCR test costs \$75 and results are ready the next day, while Antigen test costs \$35 with same day results. If you are staying at an off-high-rise area property, you can benefit from the free parking our customers receive at the mall lot.).

For more information follow us on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter. ☐



'Masha Danki' to honorary guests

ORANJESTAD — Recently, Mario Arends, representative of the Aruba Tourism Authority had the great pleasure in honoring many loyal Aruba visitors with their distinctive certificates. These certificates are a way to say "Masha Danki" for continuously choosing Aruba as a favorite vacation destination. The certificates are presented on behalf of the Minister of Tourism. The titles are as following: 10+ years "Distinguished Visitor", 20+ years "Goodwill Ambassador" and 35+ years "Emerald Ambassador".

Manuel and Linda Cruz from New Jersey received the honorary title of Emerald Ambassadors. They have been coming to the island for more than 35 years consecutively. The lovely couple stated that they love coming to the island for its beautiful weather, friendly people and the staff at the Barcelo resort. On the picture are the honorees with friends and family, Barcelo staff and ATA representative.

Robert and Janice Cook from Pennsylvania were honored as Distinguished Visitors. Mario Arends, on behalf of the Aruba tourism Authority, thanked them for choosing Aruba as their vacation destination and as their home away from home for so many years together with the members of Caribbean Palm Village. The honorees mentioned that they love coming to the island for the beautiful beaches, friendly people of the Island and great weather.

Also honored were loyal and friendly visitors Valerie Rykowski and Louis Garcia from New York and Sheila Poeppel Trudo from New Mexico, who received the certificate of Goodwill Ambassadors. The ceremony took place at their beloved home in Aruba, Caribbean Palm Village.

Rosemarie and Oscar Mauriello from Massachusetts also received a splendid surprise form the Aruba Tourism Authority as they have been honored as Goodwill Ambassadors. This lovely couple have been coming for years and enjoyed their stay at their beloved Marriott Surf Club. □





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Johnson & Johnson to split into 2, aim for faster growth

By **MICHELLE CHAPMAN**
and **TOM MURPHY** The Associated Press

Johnson & Johnson is peeling off a consumer health business that helped it become the world's biggest health care products maker.

The company said Friday that it will separate its segment that sells Band-Aids, Listerine and over-the-counter medicines like Tylenol from its pharmaceutical and medical device business.

Company leaders told analysts that the split into two

publicly traded companies will make each business more nimble in adapting to their respective markets. It also allows for a more precise allocation of capital.

CEO Alex Gorsky said that while the company's broad focus has worked in the past, the split addresses segments that "have evolved as fundamentally different businesses."

"We've seen a significant evolution in these markets, particularly on the consumer side," Gorsky said, referring in part to a shift toward online shopping that ac-

celerated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The segment selling prescription drugs and medical devices — J&J's two largest businesses — will keep the Johnson & Johnson name. Its products include the cancer treatment Darzalex, a COVID-19 vaccine and medical devices for orthopedics and surgery.

The new consumer health company has yet to be named. It will house brands including Neutrogena, Aveeno, and the iconic Band-Aids, which a company employee created



more than 100 years ago. Pharmaceuticals and medical devices pulled in a combined \$19.6 billion in revenue in the company's

recently completed third quarter, which turned out better than analysts expected. Consumer health brought in \$3.7 billion. □

AstraZeneca to book modest profit from coronavirus vaccine

By **PAN PYLAS** Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — British-Swedish pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca said Friday that it will start to book a modest profit from its coronavirus vaccine as it moves away from the nonprofit model it has operated during the pandemic.

In a third-quarter update, the company said it is "now expecting to progressively transition the vaccine to modest profitability as new orders are received." It said the "limited" profits from the vaccine in the fourth quarter will offset costs

related to its antibody cocktail developed to prevent and treat COVID-19.

Until now, AstraZeneca said it would provide the vaccine "at cost" — around \$2 to \$3 — for the duration of the pandemic following an agreement with the University of Oxford, which developed the vaccine. Other COVID-19 vaccine producers, such as Pfizer and Moderna, have been booking hefty profits on their shots all along.

AstraZeneca confirmed Friday that it will not be making any coronavirus vaccine profits from developing countries.

The change came as AstraZeneca unveiled plans to set up a separate arm for vaccines and antibody treatments that focus on COVID-19. It marks the fact that AstraZeneca was only a minor player in the provision of vaccines before the pandemic.

In its update for the three months through September, the company said revenue jumped by about 50%, to a record \$9.9 billion. The uptick was due to sales of more than \$1 billion in COVID-19 vaccines and the inclusion for the first time

of some \$1.3 billion worth of revenue from its rare disease business unit following the recent acquisition of Alexion.

"While these two exceptional items skew year-on-year growth rates, the company is still carrying strong momentum and industry-leading growth rates from its core businesses in oncology, cardiovascular, renal and metabolism, and respiratory and immunology," said Daniel Chancellor of Informa Pharma Intelligence.

AstraZeneca said the positive sales trend is set to continue following eight positive phase three trials, including treatments for liver and prostate cancer.

"AstraZeneca's scientific leadership continues to provide strong revenue growth and exceptional pipeline delivery, with eight positive late-stage readouts across seven medicines since June, including our long-acting antibody combination showing promise in both prevention and treatment of COVID-19," Chief Executive Pascal Soriot said.

AstraZeneca also held firm on its earnings guidance for the year of \$5.05 to \$5.40 a share. □



Musk sells more Tesla shares and stock continues to fall

DETROIT (AP) — Tesla CEO Elon Musk sold another chunk of his stock on Thursday after pledging on Twitter to liquidate 10% of his holdings in the electric car maker.

Musk sold about 640,000 shares for roughly \$687.3 million, according to two filings with the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. So far this week, the eccentric CEO has sold about 5.1 million shares worth about \$5.69 billion.

About \$1.1 billion of the proceeds will go toward paying tax obligations for stock options granted to Musk in September. The

options are part of a compensation package Musk and Tesla agreed to in 2018 that provided the CEO with options if Tesla hit certain financial targets. The company is now profitable and worth more than \$1 trillion. Filings from Wednesday disclosed that Musk exercised options to buy just over 2.1 million shares for \$6.24 each. Wedbush Analyst Daniel Ives has calculated that Musk has more than \$10 billion in taxes coming due on stock options that vest next summer.

Musk's sales so far amount to just over 3% of his stake in Tesla. He still owns about

167.5 million shares, or just under 17% of the company, according to the SEC filings and data provider FactSet. Last weekend, Musk said he would sell 10% of his holdings in the company, based on the results of a poll he conducted on Twitter. The sale tweets prompted heavy selling in the stock Monday and Tuesday. Shares have fallen for four out of five days this week, and they fell another 3.5% Friday. While the stock has slid 16% this week, over the last 12 months it's up 150%. Musk is Tesla's largest shareholder and is the wealthiest person in the world, ac-

cording to Forbes, with a net worth of around \$278.7 billion. Tesla Inc. is based in Palo

Alto, California, although Musk has announced the company will move its headquarters to Texas. □



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 42 Pigs' digs

1 Marsh
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6 Program-
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11 Boredom

12 Cartoon
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13 Took a
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14 Pound
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15 Converted
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17 Excellent,
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18 Pitcher's
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19 Some
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22 Agent, for
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23 Labor
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24 Road
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25 "Jane
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27 Easy
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30 Telemar-
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31 Director
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32 Possess

33 Board
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35 Styling
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38 Crowd
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39 Undermine

40 Clinic
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41 Did some
tailoring

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1 Farm
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2 Concert
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3 Corner

4 Love
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6 Upper
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8 Evening
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9 Game
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10 Coral
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Yesterday's answer

16 Gives

20 18-
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21 Corn
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24 Mars,
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25 Word
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26 Became
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27 Game
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28 Dis-
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29 Examines
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30 Garden
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34 Decisive
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36 Dedicated
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37 Homer's
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11-13

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

11-13

CRYPTOQUOTE

B S B H D Q V J B D K L A V Z D K L H B

H B G K H Z A U B Z D K L C K Y B

D K L N V B R C V Q Q C B

— M B K H M B R C C B Z Y H

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: SAYING WHAT WE THINK GIVES US A WIDER CONVERSATIONAL RANGE THAN SAYING WHAT WE KNOW.
— CULLEN HIGHTOWER



Japan's Toshiba spins off energy, computer device units

By YURI KAGEYAMA AP Business Writer

TOKYO (AP) — Embattled Japanese technology conglomerate Toshiba said Friday it is restructuring to improve its competitiveness, spinning off its energy infrastructure and computer devices businesses.

The energy infrastructure spinoff will include Tokyo-based Toshiba Corp.'s nuclear power operations, including the decommissioning efforts at the nuclear plant in Fukushima that suffered meltdowns after an earthquake and tsunami in March 2011.

The energy business will also include the company's sustainable energy and battery businesses. Its annual sales total about 2 trillion yen (\$18 billion). The other spinoff and stand-alone company encompasses Toshiba's computer devices and storage operations, with annual sales of 870 billion yen (\$7.6 billion).

Toshiba will remain a third independent company, holding what's left, such as its flash memory company Kioxia Holdings Corp. and Toshiba Tec Corp., which makes office equipment. Such a major restructuring is unusual for a big Japanese company. But Toshiba is not alone in deciding that a sprawling conglomerate may not be the best fit for the times.

Earlier this week, General Electric announced it was dividing itself into three

public companies, focused on aviation, health care and energy. Like Toshiba, GE struggled under its own weight and decided to streamline its main business after a long review.

Toshiba said its restructuring would be completed by March 2024. Separating the financial results of the companies will start from this fiscal year, it said.

Chief Executive Satoshi Tsunakawa said the two kinds of businesses being spun off were very different, with the business cycle for devices much faster than that for infrastructure, and the device business requiring heavy investments.

"It will unlock immense value by removing complexity, it enables the businesses to have much more focused management, facilitating agile decision making, and the separation naturally enhances choices for shareholders," Tsunakawa said of the new structure. The move still needs shareholders' approval. A shareholders' meeting will be held early next year, Tsunakawa said. In a statement to share-

holders, Toshiba said its "bold and ambitious plan" followed a five-month review by the board's strategy committee.

The management line-ups and names for the spinoffs will be announced later, according to Toshiba. It said adjustments to its operations and workforce were still undecided.

Earlier Friday, Toshiba issued a statement promising to beef up its corporate governance. An investigation by a governance group found no illegalities, but some managers engaged in dubious practices related to blocking the views of some shareholders.

Toshiba has periodically run into governance problems, including a scandal in 2015 over accounting books that were doctored for years to inflate earnings. Since then, the company has eliminated thousands of jobs and sold off chunks of its sprawling business.

Also Friday, Toshiba reported a 41.8 billion yen (\$367 million) profit for July-September, more than double the 14.8 billion yen profit a year earlier. □

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Teddy bear lost in Glacier park returned to 6-year-old girl

By AMY BETH HANSON Associated Press

HELENA, Mont. (AP) — A little girl who lost a special teddy bear she'd had since being adopted from an Ethiopian orphanage thought it was gone forever when she forgot it along a trail in Glacier National Park last year.

Her parents and family friends still held onto a glimmer of hope.

Hope won out.

Thanks to a social media plea, the sharp eyes and soft heart of a park ranger and the closure of a hiking trail because of grizzly bear activity on the same day a family friend visited the park, the teddy bear is back in the arms of 6-year-old Naomi Pascal in Jackson, Wyoming.

The bear's return, which has earned 12,000 likes on the Glacier National Park Facebook page, is a beautiful story that resonates, said Ben Pascal, Naomi's dad and the senior pastor at the Presbyterian Church of Jackson Hole, a popular ski town south of Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming. "It was just a story of hope and kindness and people just working together," Pascal said. "It touched people's hearts. It gave 'em hope. It made 'em feel like there is good in the world, which I believe there is."

Teddy was the first gift Ben and Addie Pascal sent to Naomi before she was adopted in 2016. She took Teddy with her on family trips to Ethiopia, Rwanda, Croatia and Greece.

When Pascal took his kids to Montana in October 2020, Teddy was once again along for the adventure. While Pascal and a friend of his went on a hike in Glacier National Park, family friend Terri Hayden watched the kids. They were almost back to Hayden's home in Bigfork that night when they realized they didn't have Teddy.

It snowed overnight, closing the higher elevations of the park for the season and preventing Hayden from returning to search for Ted-



dy. She made a report to park officials, hoping someone might turn in the bear to a lost-and-found.

It wasn't too long before Ranger Tom Mazzarisi, a bear specialist in Glacier, spotted the stuffed bear, soaking wet and sitting in melting snow near the Hidden Lake Trail while he and two others were doing some end-of-season work. "Typically, items that aren't worth much monetarily get thrown out," Mazzarisi said. He was unaware the stuffed animal had been reported lost, but for some reason couldn't bring himself to dump it in the trash. Teddy "hibernated" in Mazzarisi's cabin in St. Mary and when Mazzarisi returned to work in April he "immediately put him on the dash of my patrol truck."

"It was a perfect little mascot" and conversation piece, Mazzarisi said.

Teddy had a busy spring and summer, watch-

ing wolves howl at each other and working "bear jams," which are traffic jams caused by bears being near the road, Mazzarisi said.

In June, Addie Pascal posted a plea on Facebook for help finding Teddy, saying: "He's been by her side for so many milestones. But there are many more adventures to be had!"

People responded with well wishes and offers of replacement bears. A Michigan woman posted a photo she took of Teddy on the day it was lost, saying it was the only bear she saw in the park.

Hayden, meanwhile, felt bad about the loss of Naomi's special bear. So when she and some family members went to Glacier in late September, she told them about it and stopped to check on potential lost-and-found sites.

"I'm a woman of faith," Hayden said. "And that

morning I said, 'OK Lord, if this bear is around, please put that bear in my path and let me come home with that bear today.'"

That's exactly what happened when Hayden and her adult niece, a photographer with cancer, spotted a stuffed bear in a ranger's truck after being turned back from a trail that was closed due to bear activity.

She took a picture and sent it to Addie Pascal, who quickly confirmed it was Teddy. Unfortunately, the ranger's truck was locked. It was Mazzarisi's day off and another ranger who was working on the trail had the keys. They left a note on the vehicle and found other rangers.

"I run up to these rangers and I'm hyperventilating," Hayden said. "And I'm going, 'There's a truck down at the trailhead and there's a bear sitting on the dashboard.'"



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Sponsors asked to defend support for Beijing Winter Olympics

By STEPHEN WADE

Leading sponsors of the Beijing Winter Olympics should explain why they remain largely silent about alleged human rights abuses in China with the Games opening there in just under three months, Human Rights Watch said Friday. The rights group said in an on-line briefing that it had reached out to all but one of the IOC's so-called TOP sponsors — and leading broadcast rights holder NBC — in lengthy letters almost six months ago. The only reply came from sponsor Allianz, which it wrote only last month. "We stand behind the Olympic Movement and our longstanding support for its ideals will not waver," Allianz said. The Beijing Games open Feb. 4. The letters asked sponsors to be aware of the rights climate in China, and to scrutinize supply chains and other operations to assure they do not "contribute to human rights violations." "There are just three months



until the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, but corporate sponsors remain silent over how they are using their influence to address China's appalling human rights record," Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement. The statement said sponsors risk "being associated with an Olympics tainted by censorship and repres-

sion." The TOP sponsors, at the time of the letter, included: Airbnb, Alibaba, Allianz, Atos, Bridgestone, Coca-Cola, Dow, General Electric, Intel, Omega, Panasonic, Procter & Gamble, Toyota, and Visa. Two sponsors — Dow and General Electric — have completed contracts with the IOC that ended with the recent Tokyo Olympics. In total, TOP sponsors paid

about \$1 billion in cash and in-kind payments to the IOC in the 2013-2016 Olympic cycle, a figure that was expected to double when complete figures are released for the 2017-2020 cycle. This cycle has been delayed by the one-year postponement of Tokyo due to the pandemic. The American network NBC accounted for about 40% of IOC income in the 2013-

2016 cycle. "The time for quiet diplomacy is over," said Minky Worden of Human Rights Watch during the briefing. "It's time for the TOP sponsors to urge the International Olympic Committee to adopt human rights. It's time for them to disclose their own supply chains in China, particularly any products that have the five rings of the Olympics." In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin denounced the sponsor accountability calls from Human Rights Watch. "To politicize sports by fabricating lies and rumors and undermining the Olympic cause is unpopular and will never succeed," Wang told media at a daily briefing. The statement from the rights group comes just three days after a global trade union group issued a scathing report that questioned the propriety of China holding the Games in the face of alleged genocide and crimes against humanity reportedly taking place in the Xinjiang in northwestern China. □

Confounded by blitz, Ravens' offense wilted against Miami



By NOAH TRISTER

The Baltimore Ravens weren't climbing out of this hole. Not the way their offense was sputtering, completely unable to counter what Miami was doing. "This falls squarely on me as the head coach," Baltimore's John Harbaugh said. "We were not prepared the way we need to be prepared." The best the Ravens can hope for is that Harbaugh is right — that Thursday night's 22-10 loss at Miami

was an aberration, a result of uncharacteristically poor preparation in a short week, and not some larger flaw that other teams will now begin exploiting. Baltimore was held under 14 points for the first time in 52 games. Lamar Jackson and the offense weren't able to deal with Miami's blitzing. After Justin Tucker's field goal on the opening possession, the Ravens didn't score again until the latter part of the fourth quarter.

Tucker even missed a field goal on the team's second drive, perhaps the first sign that something was amiss. Then the Ravens (6-3) punted seven straight times, not counting an abbreviated possession at the end of the half. Over and over, the Dolphins sent unblocked pass rushers after Jackson, and Baltimore couldn't take advantage of Miami's aggressiveness with big gains. "(Cover) Zero is like one of those things where you have to make them pay, you know?" tight end Mark Andrews said. "I don't think early on we did that enough. That's one of the things, you make them pay early on, they kind of get out of there." The loss certainly raised questions whether the AFC North-leading Ravens are as good as their record. Three of their victories came in games they trailed by double digits in the second half, and they couldn't

pull off a similar comeback after Miami went ahead 15-3. **WHAT'S WORKING** Red-zone defense. This helped keep the Ravens within striking distance for a while. Miami had first-and-goal from the 5-yard line in the second quarter, but a holding penalty knocked the Dolphins back and they settled for a field goal. Miami had first-and-goal from the 4 in the final seconds of the half, but the Dolphins mismanaged the clock a bit and ended up kicking a field goal on third down. In the fourth quarter, Miami had first-and-goal from the 1, but Baltimore again forced a field goal, with the help of a false-start penalty. **WHAT NEEDS HELP** According to Next Gen Stats, Miami's Jevon Holland blitzed 21 times and fellow safety Brandon Jones blitzed 17 times. Those two blitzed more times than any defensive back in a game in the Next Gen Stats era,

dating back to 2016. The Ravens couldn't do much of anything against it until the very end of the game, when Jackson completed enough quick, short passes to drive 99 yards for a touchdown that made it 15-10. Even that drive was aided significantly by Miami penalties. Baltimore will likely see similar defensive strategies until the Ravens show they can beat that pressure. "There was a guy free every time I was dropping back," Jackson said. **STOCK UP** Rookie Rashod Bateman continues to impress. He caught six passes for 80 yards. **STOCK DOWN** Marquise Brown caught only six passes for 37 yards on 13 targets. Miami's strategy of crowding the line of scrimmage created an opportunity for Baltimore's receivers, and aside from Bateman nobody took much advantage. □

'A big task': China's Olympic hockey team facing questions

By STEPHEN WHYNO

For the first time since the NHL began sending players to the Olympics in 1998, there is concern the host country might not be able to score, much less win a game, at the world's biggest sporting event.

China's men's team is ranked 32nd in the world and is in a group with the United States and Canada, two of the medal favorites among the 12 teams going to the Winter Games in February. A team made up of likely Chinese national team players has struggled against other competition so far, raising fears it will be blown out of its own buildings on home ice in Beijing. This has all led to what new International Ice Hockey Federation president Luc Tardif called a "test" next week near Moscow, and it is certainly unusual: China will play two games as Beijing-based KHL team Kunlun Red Star against Russian opponents. IIHF and Chinese hockey officials will be watching closely, in person and online, and hoping the team isn't going to be embarrassed against NHL competition in February.

"The team we will have in front of us, in two games, we will just to see the score and the way the game was playing, we will quickly know if they've got the level or not," Tardif told The Associated Press in a recent interview. "It will be not only the score but the way the game was played."

It's unclear how — or who — will grade this test. The IIHF said last week it will not remove China from the tournament — it does not have the unilateral authority to do that — and it would be



up to the Chinese government to pull the plug.

That would be a humiliating step: A host country's team has never been withdrawn from the modern-day Olympics for solely performance-related reasons, according to Olympic historian Bill Mallon.

There is good reason it is even being contemplated: Kunlun, which has been used as something of a proxy for the Chinese national team to get experience in a professional league, has lost 20 of its 26 KHL games this season and been outscored 96-57 in the process.

Tardif said there are no such concerns about China's women's team, which is ranked 20th and in an Olympic group with less daunting competition.

The disappointing performance by the Chinese men's team so far is not for lack of effort, though clearly the work didn't bear fruit. The Chinese Ice Hockey Association failed in its attempt to develop a home-grown roster over the past

few years, so the team's top players are North American — some with family ties to the country and others who have been naturalized after joining Kunlun and earning international approval to play for China.

Leading scorers Spencer Foo and Brandon Yip and top defenseman Ryan Sproul are Canadian and starting goaltender Jeremy Smith is American, though there is still some uncertainty about who will go to Beijing. The IIHF would not confirm which players on Kunlun's roster were eligible.

Stocking Olympic rosters with international players is not uncommon, certainly not since the host country started getting an automatic berth in the hockey tournament in 2006. Italy that year had nine Canadians and two Americans, and South Korea in 2018 had six Canadians and one American. Neither team won a game.

Yip, by far the most accomplished player for China with 174 games of NHL

experience, hopes playing together for several years and employing a tight defensive scheme can help his team hang with Canada, the U.S. and Germany in a difficult Olympic group. "Obviously when you look at our teams on paper, it's a big discrepancy," said Yip, a 36-year-old from British Columbia who has played for Kunlun since 2017. "We obviously know what we're up against. They're the best players in the world, so we've got a big task in front of us."

How big a task?

Longmou Li, a longtime Chinese broadcaster who is VP of communications for Kunlun, figures the U.S. and Canada will shut out China, maybe 8-0 or 10-0, and added the focus is on the third game against Germany. Asked what would be considered success, Li said: "Score one goal and better performance. Not a disaster."

China has endured painful sporting losses before, namely in soccer when it did not qualify for the 2010

World Cup and sacked its manager after going winless on home soil at the 2008 Olympics. Susan Brownell, a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis and expert on Chinese sports, believes a poor result this time could cause an inspection of hockey from the head government level.

"If I was a hockey administrator, I'd be shaking in my boots," said Brownell, who considers the failure of China's hockey academy program a big reason for the current conundrum. "The criticism really is that you invest all this money and you can't produce results."

Much like in other sports, China brought in international coaches to help: Stanley Cup winner Mike Keenan was fired after just 36 games behind the bench with Kunlun in 2017, and the team has gone through Bobby Carpenter, Curt Fraser and Alexei Kovalev before landing on Italian-Canadian Ivano Zanatta for the Olympic job.

"Usually resources and money is not a question in China," said Li Li Ji, a Chinese national and professor of kinesiology who brings Chinese athletes and coaches to study at the University of Minnesota. "If they want to build something, they seem to be willing to put an unlimited amount of money in."

Time was not on China's side. Li pointed out that it took Switzerland decades to reach the top level of international hockey, and China only put efforts into high gear after being awarded the 2022 Olympics in the summer of 2015. □

CEO of Germany's Olympic body quits amid further turmoil

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — The chief executive of the German Olympic committee said Friday she will step down as the organization faces a backlash over an attempt to identify the author of an anonymous letter which criticized how it was run.

The letter was published in May by anonymous employees of the organization, known as the DOSB, and claimed there was a "climate of fear" among staff. President Alfons Hörmann was accused in the letter of putting psychologi-

cal pressure on employees and taking a lax attitude to coronavirus regulations.

Hörmann said in June he wouldn't run for reelection in December after eight years in charge when he faced a vote of confidence. Chief executive Veronika Rucker will now also leave Dec. 31, she and Hörmann said in a joint statement Friday.

A former board member, Karin Fehres, said she received a letter urging her to admit to writing the anonymous letter and threatening pos-

sible legal action, in a response first published this week by Germany's FAZ newspaper. Fehres said she did not write the letter.

Rucker and Hörmann defended the attempt to identify the letter's author alongside an investigation into management and the working environment at the DOSB but said it "appears disproportionate in hindsight." They said they had been following legal advice when they commissioned a linguistic analysis to try to find the author. □

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